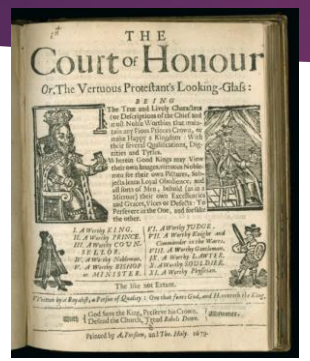
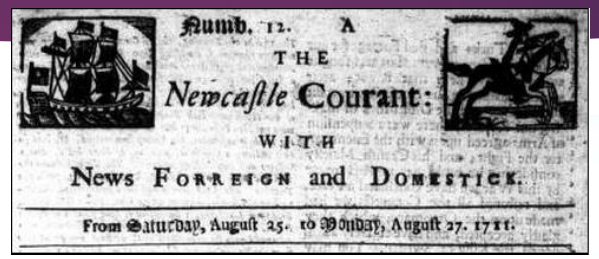
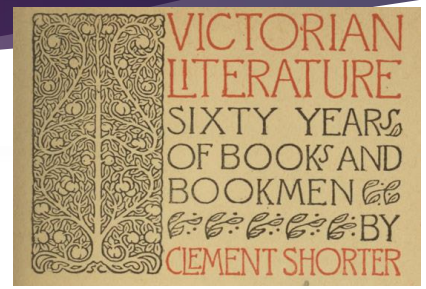
How has the media developed? What is it? When did it start?







Printing press

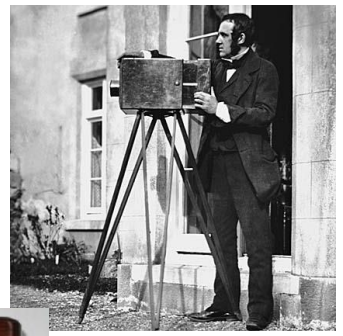
Pamphlets

Novels

Photography
Mass circulation newspapers

Radio
Television

World Wide Web
Social media



1500 1600 1700 1800 1900 2000

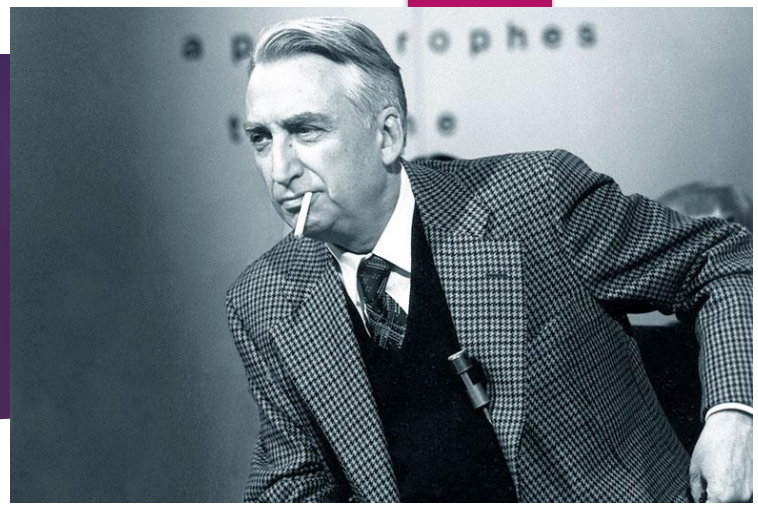
Match the (attributed) creator to the medium

- Marconi
- Lumiere brothers
- Gutenberg
- Baird
- Cinema/film
- TV
- Radio
- Print

Learning Objectives:

- To revise Barthes' key concepts;
- To understand how to apply these to relevant CSPs.

Roland Barthes



- Up until roughly the 1950s, the academic study of culture was largely limited to high culture e.g. Literature, fine art, architecture, music etc.
- In 1957 influential cultural theorist, Roland Barthes, realised that mass media also ought to be taken seriously and studied. He published a set of essays named 'Mythologies' which analysed mass popular culture (from horoscopes to politics to car adverts to wrestling!)
- At the heart of Barthes' argument is the idea that mass culture has far more influence on our ideologies than high culture.

1950s = POST MORDERN

Concept 1: Denotation and connotation

- Barthes tells us that media products are decoded by their readers. The first instance of decoding is denotation/a denotive reading. This is when readers recognise the physical/literal content of media imagery.

- A denotive reading of the 'I, Daniel Blake' poster would simply be 'an older man, wearing dark clothing with his fist raised in the air.

Concept 1: Denotation and connotation

- Barthes tells us that readers quickly move beyond the denotive, and move onto the connotative. These refer to deeper understandings prompted by media imagery, and ae affected by contexts and ideologies (some even create/produce ideologies.)
- Connotative elements of the 'I, Daniel Blake' poster are: the raised fist as defiance, the character's costume infers poverty/working class life, the dark clothing could reflect a sombre/sad tone and could tell us that the advertised film will deal with serious and/or tragic themes.
- Audiences use their cultural knowledge and social experiences of similar imagery (signs) to help them construct an understanding of the product's significance and meaning.

Codes and Conventions

Codes: systems of signs, put together (usually in a sequence) to create meaning

Conventions: habits or long accepted ways of doing things…through repeated experiences, audiences become familiar with these

Types of Codes

- Technical Codes:

  Camera techniques, framing, depth of field, lighting, exposure and juxtaposition

- Symbolic Codes

  Objects, setting, body language, clothing and color

- Written Codes

  Headlines, captions, speech bubbles, language style

Barthes: worksheet

concept one: denotation and connotation

1. What does Barthes tell us is a denotative reading?

2. What is a connotative reading and how does it differ from denotation?

3. Identify the connotations of the following elements of the I, Daniel Blake poster.

Element	Denotative element	Potential Connotation
Model pose	The model poses with a raised fist	The raised fist symbolises...
Costume	The man in the poster wears a black hat and worn out clothing	The rough and ready clothing infers...
Setting	The man is pictured against a grey background	The grey background suggests...
Typography	The words 'I, Daniel Blake' are handwritten at the bottom of the poster.	The handwritten lettering connotes...
Composition	The man is positioned on the left handside of the screen and is walking towards the left.	The left hand positioning implies...

Barthes: worksheet

concept one: denotation and connotation

4. Audiences use which of the following to decode media imagery?

a. Their cultural knowledge
b. Their experience of similar products
c. Their innate knowledge of media design
d. Their knowledge of fashion

5. What does Barthes tell us anchorage is?

Anchorage
Text components in newspapers - headers and captions - are used to anchor meaning.

6. How does the header of this front page change the meaning of the accompanying image?

Vocab tip:
Barthes suggests that media imagey is **polysemic** - that imagery conevys multiple meanings

7. Colour choices help to convey connotations in media design. What connotations do the following colours produce?

red

green

black

white

blue

8. Barthes suggests that media products are open to mutiple readings for what reason?

9. Using one of your print set texts, locate more examples of anchorage - look for products that contain captions, headlines or accompanying descriptions.

text element	imagery text element refers to	potential connotation

More from Barthes…

- The interplay between text and image is determined by the positioning of the textual components and by the relative size of each element. Barthes says that text is used to 'anchor' images to meanings in print, news and advertisements. These are to guide readers towards defined significations.
- Consider the image without ANY of the text. What meanings might an audience take without the anchorage?
- *Without anchorage media imagery is likely to produce polysemic connotations or multiple meanings.*
- Apply the terms from your 'Connotative Effects' table to the washing powder advertisement.

Barthes five code symphony

Barthes's denotation/connotation model provides an excellent framework for analysing print media. We can use it to diagnose the effects of costume choices or settings, or to think about the significations created through shot distance or shot composition. Barthes's denotation/connotation model, however, is less effective when we have to consider the way in which elements combine to produce singular effects. Narratives, for instance, set up meanings at the start of stories that are connected to later narrative events – stories, for example, tease audiences with mysteries that are only resolved at the end. Similarly, some connotations are used throughout a text in a way that gives them a deeper connotative meaning than if they appeared just once. For example, the repeated use of food-oriented references in the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale – breadcrumbs, the gingerbread house, the cooking of the witch – creates an enhanced symbolic effect.

To account for this, Barthes produced a more nuanced version of his denotation/connotation model in which a symphony of five explicit coding effects are used to create meaning. These connotative effects, he argues, operate like voices or instruments in a band – sometimes playing in unison, while at other moments they are muted so that single codes can deliver solo effects.

Barthes details his five code symphony as follows:

- **Hermeneutic codes (enigmas):** construct moments of mystery to intrigue the reader or viewer. Enigmas also hook readers, compelling further reading or viewing to locate answers to the questions posed. The header of the 'Tide' advert in Figure 1.2, for instance, constructs a hermeneutic response through the header element. Readers are prompted to ponder what it is that 'women want', while the enigma is only resolved if the rest of the advert is consumed. Some products, Barthes tells us, rely on hermeneutic codes more than others – crime dramas, for instance, usually convey and reinforce long standing enigmas throughout their narratives.
- **Proairetic codes (actions):** narratives also offer moments in which meaning is conveyed through action or demonstration. Action provides explanation or excitement, sometimes working to resolve the enigmas that earlier narrative sequences might pose.

The depiction of the washing machine in the top right hand corner of the 'Tide' advert (Figure 1.2), for example, constructs a proairetic moment in that the imagery illustrates how the washing powder is used. Again, some products deploy proairetic codes more than others: science fiction, thrillers and crime dramas, for instance, typically rely on moments of concentrated action to generate viewer excitement.

- **Semantic codes (connotative elements):** refers to any element within a media text that produces a single connotative effect. Semantic codes include lighting, *mise en scène* and colour usage. They also refer to the use of compositional effects, pose or even to typographic decisions and the significations that text size or font selection convey. Semantic code connotations, for example, are created in the 'Tide' advert (Figure 1.2) via the wavelike arrangement of the 'What Women Want' header (connoting an upbeat jaunty tone), while the repeated use of exclamation marks throughout the advert construct energy and volume.
- **Symbolic codes:** semantic and symbolic codes are highly similar and often quite hard to tease apart. Perhaps one of the easiest ways to seek out the symbolic codes within a product is to search for repeated symbols that convey a deeper meaning. In television, symbolic codes often surface as repeated themes or visual motifs and are referenced throughout the story in a thread of continuous underlying meaning. In the 'Tide' advert (Figure 1.2), the repetition of the word 'clean' and the way that cleanliness in general is presented could be considered to be symbolic meaning making.
- **Cultural codes (referential codes):** refers to the inclusion of material that generates meaning from outside the product. Cultural codes might include the use of proverbs, sayings or idioms. They might also include references to scientific or historical knowledge – in short, anything that relies on the audience's knowledge beyond the text. Intertextual references, too, can be considered to be a form of cultural code in that they reference meanings from outside the product. Tide, for instance, offers cultural coding through the intertextual reference made to the 'We can do it' Second World War propaganda poster (Figure 1.3). The reference here constructs the suggestion that Tide is a patriotic product.

Barthes: worksheet

concept one: the five code symphony

1.Why did Barthes upgrade his denotation/connotation analysis model?

2. Fill in the following table to help you understand Barthes' five code symphony

Code	Your definition	Use/effect of the code in the Tide advert?
Hermeneutics (enigmas)		
Proairetics (action)		
Semantic		
Cultural		
Symbolic		

Revise it: chapter 1 page 3-11

Barthes: worksheet

concept one: the five code symphony

Vocab tip:

Hermeneutic moments create suspense
Proairetic moments create excitement

3. Apply Barthes five code symphony to one of your set texts

Code	Elements within the product that use this type of code	Potential effect and coonotations created for the audience through the use of these elements
Hermeneutics (enigmas)		
Proairetics (action)		
Semantic		
Cultural		
Symbolic		